

Hastings: Azerbaijan's parliamentary elections "did not meet" international commitments



Delivering the conclusions of the joint International Election Observation Mission to the November 6 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, OSCE PA President Alcee L. Hastings reported that the "elections did not meet a number of OSCE commitments and Council of Europe standards for democratic elections." President Hastings delivered the conclusions in a press conference yesterday on behalf of the joint Mission, which included over 600 observers from 42 countries. Hastings was appointed by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel, to lead the observation effort on behalf of the OSCE.

"It pains me to report that progress noted in the pre-election period was undermined by significant deficiencies in the count," said Congressman Hastings. The PA President in particular pointed to serious deficiencies in the counting and tabulation of the votes. President Hastings also expressed concern over restrictions placed on the freedom of assembly prior to the elections, which he noted had marred the campaign.

The International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) noted some improvements over previous practice in the pre-election period. For example, there was an inclusive candidate registration process, and free television airtime enabled political parties and blocs to convey their messages to the electorate. While the introduction of inking of voters' fingers was considered a positive step towards enhancing the integrity of the vote, this decision was taken very late in the process and was not implemented consistently.

President Hastings was joined by over 60 other representatives of the OSCE PA, including Vice-Presidents Nevzat Yalcintas, Tone Tingsgård, Giovanni Kessler and Pia Christmas-Møller. Members were deployed at polling stations throughout the day and contributed to the conclusions of the IEOM.

The IEOM was a joint undertaking of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

The OSCE PA observation effort was supported by Deputy Secretary General Tina Schøn, Programme Officer Paul LeGendre, and Programme and Press Officer Andreas Baker.



President Hastings and Vice-President Nevzat Yalcintas speak to election authorities in a polling station in Baku